



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 20, 2010

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## **CARDIN STATEMENT ON THE ANNOUNCED RESUMPTION OF DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY**

*Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released the following statement on the announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Israel and the Palestinian Authority would resume direct peace talks.*

"After a 20 month halt, I am pleased to hear that Israelis and Palestinians will once again sit down together for direct talks on the Middle East Peace Process. After strong diplomatic action by the Administration, particularly by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Special Envoy George Mitchell, next month Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas are expected to restart discussions on the how to move forward toward a stable and lasting peace in the region.

"Israel's quick acceptance of the invitation to Washington is hallmark of its willingness for direct negotiations. Israel has consistently acknowledged the necessary framework for any peace agreement – two states living side-by-side in peace and security. The Palestinian Authority's agreement to resume direct talks certainly marks a positive turning point in the peace process. However, Hamas' quick dismissal of the new round of talks clearly indicates its desire to remain an obstacle to peace.

"The U.S. and Israel have always shared the same goals: to restart the peace process and prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state. I expect the United States to continue to act as an honest broker in this process. It is imperative that the Obama Administration stand with the people of Israel and that we do all that is possible to protect our shared values and joint national interests."

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